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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

The present report reviews and updates the key elements of the programming framework of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the annual management planning process, and recent initiatives designed to create and sustain public support for the Fund and the women on whose behalf UNIFEM works. It also presents current examples of the organization's work that demonstrate critical aspects of UNIFEM's programming approach, specifically highlighting the Fund's contribution to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process. In closing, the report features a preview of UNIFEM's preparations for the 1995 World Conference on Women, to be held in China.

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CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	BACKGROUND	1 - 3	3
II.	PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT	4 - 26	4
	A. Africa	5 - 9	4
	B. Asia and the Pacific	10 - 15	5
	C. Latin America and the Caribbean	16 - 20	7
	D. Global initiatives	21 - 26	8
III.	ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT	27 - 28	10
IV.	PUBLIC SUPPORT	29 - 35	10
V.	FUTURE DIRECTIONS: THE ROAD TO BEIJING	36 - 37	12

I. BACKGROUND

1. Between 1989 and 1991, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) invested considerable effort in defining and channelling its priorities to maximize the Fund's catalytic role, mandated under General Assembly resolution 39/125. In the course of this exercise, UNIFEM defined its mission and longer-term priority as "support for the efforts of the women of the developing world to achieve their objectives for economic and social development and equality". At that time, it was also agreed that the regional programmes for Asia/Pacific and Western Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean would be the instruments for translating this long-term priority into shorter-term action plans suited to the specific requirements and conditions within each region.

2. To ensure the significance of UNIFEM's impact, it was further decided that the Fund would work with women and their partners in two key areas: agriculture and trade and industry. Interventions here would be complemented by technical support for credit, technology transfer, small business development, and training. In addition, UNIFEM would seek to foster an enabling policy environment in support of the activities of low-income women by working simultaneously at the grass-roots level and at the macro or policy level; and, through documenting and disseminating its most effective and innovative initiatives, the Fund would enhance its function as an instrument of advocacy and action in the service of women of the developing world.

3. Some key factors contributing to the successful work of the Fund during the period under review include, first of all, UNIFEM's formal and informal relations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), including the resident representatives, who serve as the Fund's field representatives; the participation of the regional bureaux and the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation (BPPE) in UNIFEM project approval committees; and UNIFEM's active involvement in UNDP discussions on matters related to policy and operations. Secondly, there is the support and advice which the Fund receives from the Consultative Committee, whose function it is to advise on matters of policy affecting UNIFEM and to monitor UNDP arrangements for managing the Fund. Finally, there is the ongoing review and refinement of the Fund's objectives provided by the UNIFEM staff at the annual strategic planning workshop. Here, the discourse has led to the identification of a third key programme area: macro policy and planning, and has encouraged UNIFEM to strengthen its mission statement to reflect the Fund's continuing commitment to an improved quality of life for women and men alike. The strategic planning exercise has also advanced the UNIFEM agenda in other critical ways: (a) it has helped to enhance the Fund's effectiveness in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategic programmes, projects and activities; (b) it has kept staff alert to the ways in which changing global priorities, such as questions of sustainable development and governance, may affect the conditions and the advancement of women in the developing world; and (c) it has provided a forum in which UNIFEM could explore alternative strategies for addressing long-standing problems such as violence against women, or the more recent challenges posed by the rapidly expanding communities of internally displaced and refugee women.

II. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

4. The regional programmes, which shape UNIFEM short-term priorities, are refined and updated every two years in collaboration with partners in the regions. Subject to review by the Consultative Committee, these programmes identify region-specific goals for the two-year period and outline the operational strategies for achieving these goals. They also offer scope for identifying and acting upon emerging issues and new requirements. Described below are a few highlights drawn from the regional programmes that capture the thrust of UNIFEM's work.

A. Africa

5. The Africa programme for 1991-1992 provides a good example of how a regional programme can both advance UNIFEM's longer-term priorities, and remain responsive to changing circumstances at the national and/or regional levels. In 1988, UNIFEM began to support a nationally executed project in Liberia, designed to assist market women increase their access to credit and to acquire savings for investment in productive activities. The outbreak of civil war in December 1989 brought the project to a halt. Recognizing that it is in just such times of crisis that women stand most in need of help, UNIFEM began to redirect its assistance towards creating a model for gender-sensitive, development-oriented relief efforts.

6. A project is now under way in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to provide support to Liberian women refugees as well as local women who have been affected by the influx of refugees into their communities. The project operates in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active within these communities. It addresses the immediate needs articulated by the women themselves and offers shelter, trauma counselling, health education, and training in "portable skills", which can generate income for the women both in their current circumstances and on their return to their home country, should this become possible. Reports from UNHCR confirm that where formerly the women were passive and reluctant to participate in refugee-camp activities, they are now highly motivated and a large number of them have joined in the construction of a centre that will become a "room of their own" for counselling, training classes and recreational activities.

7. The Liberian project illustrates the manner in which the UNIFEM mandate to provide direct financial and technical support to low-income women can be applied even in situations of flux and uncertainty. Today, almost 75 per cent of the world's 15 million refugees are women and children, and of these one third are African. In order to protect the investments that the Fund has made in other countries, UNIFEM has used the Liberian experience as the basis for formulating a new programme that applies gender analysis to the situation of refugee and displaced women. The African Women in Crisis Umbrella Programme is intended to facilitate quick responses to women in crisis by supporting models of intervention that empower them and ensure their involvement in the resolution of the problems they face.

8. Recognizing that after almost a decade of assisting national and subregional policy organizations to acquire gender training and analytical skills, the demand for such skills still exceeds Africa's capacity to respond; and aware that systematic knowledge about indigenous institutions, training expertise and methodologies remains incomplete, UNIFEM began to formulate a major initiative aimed at improving the capacity of key African institutions already providing gender training.

9. Working in conjunction with the African Development Bank, UNIFEM funded a meeting in Côte d'Ivoire in November 1992 on mainstreaming gender concerns into African training and research institutes. The session brought together key trainers working at the grass-roots level, as well as researchers and representatives of institutions in the field of gender training. It also marked the beginning of a continent-wide, participatory process of collaboration and programme development intended to promote the formulation of a UNIFEM-funded, multifaceted programme of support for indigenous, African gender training and research activities. A meeting of the new network, which brings together anglophone and francophone Africa, is planned to take place in Tunisia early in 1993. This initiative complements the gender-training activities of the UNDP Gender-in-Development Programme intended to galvanize a multilateral effort to build a common gender-training programme for United Nations organizations, government planners and policy makers. By strengthening indigenous African institutions, UNIFEM support will begin to enhance their capacity to respond to the increased demand for gender training that UNDP's initiative will generate.

B. Asia and the Pacific

10. In the Asia and the Pacific programme, much of UNIFEM work focuses on ways of linking women at the grass-roots level with the macro-policy formulation that shapes their future. The Fund directly supports small, but creative, women's initiatives demonstrating effective development alternatives that can be linked to larger innovative programmes designed to stimulate a more enabling policy environment. The comparative advantage of UNIFEM resides at this very intersection of macro-policy and micro-action.

11. One of the most distinct examples of how macro/micro linkages are activated in the UNIFEM programme brought representatives of peasant women from South-East Asia to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This was the culmination of a process begun in 1991, when national summits on environment and development were held in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The summits brought together grass-roots women leaders, scientists, politicians, national planners and policy makers in a dialogue to ensure that the voices of some 500 local women leaders were heard by those responsible for plans and policies directly affecting these women's lives. Subsequently, three peasant women leaders were selected to attend the Earth Summit in Rio and report on the ways in which environmental degradation had affected the well-being of women from their region. The representatives at the Earth Summit were subsequently required to report back to their constituencies and to identify, together with policy makers, planners and scientists, the steps necessary to implement the agreements and alternative treaties negotiated respectively at UNCED and the Global Forum. These follow-up activities have

been incorporated into the current Asia and Pacific programme and several initiatives are presently under way.

12. Because the allocation of critical development resources is made through national development plans, the Asia/Pacific section has also focused on creating adaptable models for making national development planning gender-responsive; models which use a participatory approach encompassing the needs, interests and voices not only of women, but of grass-roots people in general. UNIFEM provides training to build capacities within central planning and sectoral ministries of Governments as well as within national women's organizations.

13. Given the importance of gender-sensitive data and statistics as a basis for planning, UNIFEM has also supported innovative projects in data and statistics where women's invisibility has denied them access to economic and other resources. The two countries with the world's largest populations, China and India, were targeted by the Fund to support the collection and use of statistics demonstrating women's considerable contribution to the economy as well as to other sectors. In India, through the collaborative efforts of UNIFEM, UNFPA, national NGOs, and government ministries concerned, the 1991 census broke new ground by redefining work to include women's contributions in the informal sector. Such data, so essential for developing appropriate national plans, had never before been as fully captured in the census because of the bias of questions asked by enumerators. In China, the State Statistical Bureau is embarking on an experimental approach to the collection and dissemination of statistics on gender issues. Consultations among users and producers of statistics will result in the identification of priority gender issues to be reflected in official statistics. A popular booklet on "Women and Men in China" will be published in time for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in Beijing in 1995. This UNIFEM initiative is being supported by the Government of Sweden and by UNDP.

14. Development programmes and projects with women beneficiaries in the Arab States, whether initiated by Governments, or through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, are facing common difficulties. These constraints stem mostly from one common factor: although the region has first-rate experts and institutions, few of them have sufficient experience with gender issues to be able to render the substantial support and services needed for development efforts aimed at mainstreaming women in national economic development. The importance of developing national and regional capacity in terms of gender in development is particularly crucial in the case of the Arab States in order to safeguard the cultural and social fabric of each community while narrowing the gender gaps which stand in the way of sustainable human development. Because of this, UNIFEM has decided to intensify its efforts through a series of initiatives specifically directed at this problem. One example is a newly approved programme to strengthen institutions dealing with the development of women's business enterprises. This programme is based on extensive discussions with Governments, NGOs and grass-roots women in Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen.

15. These three countries were all deeply affected by the consequences of the Gulf War, which compounded existing economic and social crises, including

unemployment estimates exceeding 30 per cent. As elsewhere in the world, women have generally paid the heaviest toll during this time of economic hardship. Obliged by dire need to join the work force, women face sexual discrimination and psychological pressure from communities that generally view men as the sole breadwinners for the family. All too frequently, this means that men take precedence over women in terms of job opportunities. This situation exacerbates the existing impediments to women's economic activities, which include lack of access to information, business management training, technology and credit. UNIFEM is using a programme approach that simultaneously focuses on assisting government and non-government institutions involved in income-generating enterprises for women to strengthen their ability to do strategic planning and to make certain that their services actually reach low-income women. To ensure future capacity and sustainability, other key components of the programme include the training of trainers and the establishment of an information and resource centre.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

16. Throughout the world, women of all social classes and races are threatened or constrained in their everyday lives and work by the fear of overt and/or indirect violence. Whether routinely battered, sexually coerced or mentally abused, women often become part of the vicious circle that keeps them imprisoned. Weakened and isolated, afraid and unsure of themselves, they become in effect their own jailors, unaware of or afraid to exercise their full human rights and potential. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNIFEM has worked with women of the region to call attention to the immediate negative impact of violence and to shed light on the long-term extent to which aggression against women is a major factor preventing women's full participation in the development process. UNIFEM has supported networking efforts between and among women's anti-violence groups; broad-based public education programmes involving citizens, police officers, public officials, lawmakers and others; and direct advocacy work in shelters and women's centres throughout the hemisphere.

17. Increased official recognition of the dimensions of the problem of violence against women, coupled with the galvanization of women's groups around the issue, encourages UNIFEM to continue its innovative support. In August 1992, women from 21 countries in the region gathered in Brazil for a UNIFEM-sponsored conference on women and sexual and domestic violence. This conference laid the groundwork for the building of a Latin American and Caribbean network on domestic and sexual violence. In Venezuela, UNIFEM continues to support an innovative, gender-awareness training programme, developed by the Venezuela Association for Alternative Sexual Education (AVESA) for police officers and university security personnel attending to battered women in Caracas. Since the programme was initiated in 1989, over 450 officers (fully one fifth of them women) have been sensitized to the issue. An additional 1,000 officers and/or security staff will be trained by AVESA with the Fund's support over the next 12-month period. UNIFEM has encouraged and supported AVESA efforts to share this model training programme with other countries of the South. In addition, since mainstreaming and mobilization of resources for the support of these initiatives is important, in June 1993 UNIFEM is co-hosting, with the Government of the Netherlands, an

international seminar that will provide a setting for dialogue among policy makers, donors, and women who have developed effective approaches to reducing violence.

18. Throughout the developing world, women are intimately linked to the food systems whereby they sustain themselves and their families. In Latin America, rural women have historically combined domestic labour with work in subsistence agriculture and cash-cropping. Poor urban women, finding it evermore difficult to provide for their families under conditions of widespread macroeconomic austerity, have become involved in user-managed soup kitchens, micro-enterprises, storage centres, and communal shops. Women's struggle to feed themselves and their families is compounded by little or no access to land ownership, to credit, to appropriate technology for small-scale production, to quality control for marketing, or to organizations through which they could work more successfully together to promote their interests as women and food producers.

19. UNIFEM, therefore, has, developed a technology support preparatory assistance programme in the Andean region to help ensure food security among women while at the same time fostering the emergence of women's groups organized around agriculture and resource-use issues. Within the context of this programme, an Andean regional women's food technology contest was held to draw attention to women's success in producing and marketing staple foods and innovative new products for local consumption. These include growing cereals and grains; engaging in terrace agriculture; raising guinea-pigs; and producing dried bananas. UNIFEM has also supported networking efforts among indigenous grass-roots women's agricultural groups and productive associations; and the Fund has encouraged inter-agency collaboration on economic and applied educational issues related to food production, fostering gender-sensitive discussion of the inter-relationship between rural development, the informal sector, and environmental issues.

20. An example of UNIFEM efforts to strengthen existing regional networks can be found in the support which the Fund continues to offer the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies. For the past several years WAND has served as a resource and clearinghouse for community-based Caribbean networks, groups and organizations, as well as for the staff of key national, regional and international programmes interested in alternative development strategies. With UNIFEM support, WAND is seeking to analyse how women's NGOs can transform themselves into effective vehicles for social change, and to assist these groups in their efforts to increase the impact of their work through improved networking, management systems and fund-raising activities.

D. Global initiatives

21. Apart from its regional programmes, UNIFEM objectives are also realized through certain global initiatives that focus attention across regions on matters of particular and immediate concern to the international community at large. For example, the UNIFEM programme entitled "Women, Environment and Development" successfully positioned the Fund within the multilateral sustainable development effort, ensuring that women's concerns are a part of

the international agenda, building consensus among women's groups, raising awareness of women's roles in environmental management, and influencing policy decisions in favour of women.

22. A key aspect of this mainstreaming exercise was the UNIFEM support to the UNCED secretariat in the person of a Special Adviser on Women, Environment and Development. This proved vital in ensuring that these concerns were integrated into all relevant programme areas of the UNCED Agenda 21. Indeed, while the sectoral chapters of Agenda 21 provide important recommendations for women, environment and development, Chapter 24, entitled "Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development" represents a milestone, providing, as it does, direction for implementation, monitoring and accountability by the international community on action programmes to promote women, environment and development.

23. In other related activities, UNIFEM held technical briefings, round-table meetings and workshops; participated in numerous international conferences; and supported an international women's caucus of delegates, officials, NGOs and parliamentarians attending the preparatory committees and the Earth Summit. Through presentations to the media, as well as speeches and briefings prior to and during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, UNIFEM also succeeded in raising awareness on the issue of women's access to high-level decision-making positions in the post-UNCED institutions. These efforts were supported throughout with substantive publications. Approximately 40,000 copies of an award-winning environment kit and poster in English, French and Spanish were distributed at the Earth Summit. In addition, UNIFEM's environmentally correct buttons were reported by the press as being the "hit of Rio" and have gained international popularity. Furthermore, the joint UNIFEM/UNCED publication, Agenda 21: An Easy Reference to the Specific Recommendations on Women, has made a strategic contribution to promoting further actions on WED at the international and national levels.

24. UNIFEM programme staff benefited immeasurably from the assignment of a Netherlands-funded technical adviser on WED to UNIFEM. The Fund is currently drawing up its own strategy to promote the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21. In addition, membership on the UNDP Environment Action Team, the UNDP Steering Committee for Capacity 21, and the UNDP GEF Small-Grants Programme Committee provide the Fund with opportunities to mainstream WED further into UNDP policy and operational activities.

25. Global initiatives allow UNIFEM to use its position within the United Nations system and its strong ties to the international women's movement to voice the concerns of the majority of the world's women who live in poverty and to ensure that a gender dimension is incorporated into international geo-political and economic debates. In this respect, the UNCED experience may be seen to have yielded certain important lessons for UNIFEM in relation to future global activities: (a) the visible presence and participation of women at the policy-making level is critical for mainstreaming WID issues and interests; (b) the support of grass-roots women, and the articulation of their concerns in public forums can be a powerful tool for empowerment and advocacy; (c) the model of intervention used in the UNCED process may be applied, for mainstreaming purposes, to other areas and other issues; (d) micro-macro

interventions make it possible for women to resolve complex issues surrounding the impact of gender in development.

26. The UNCED experience is already being applied to the Fund's strategy on women refugees. UNIFEM is now reviewing how it may institutionalize the UNCED model within its programme of work, extending it to other critical areas such as international trade.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

27. In an effort to strengthen the quality of its work, UNIFEM regularly reviews, modifies and streamlines the system for programme and project development, appraisal and approval. The introduction of a phased plan for the devolution of certain financial/programme approval authority to regional programme advisers is well under way. These improvements in management processes have contributed over the past two years to achieving significant increases in programme delivery as well as reducing the interval between project approvals and the initiation of implementation.

28. Underpinning the Fund's considerable progress in clarifying its vision, expanding the scope of its work, and achieving its targets, has been the reconfiguration of the organization to underscore the importance of the people who work at UNIFEM - to emphasize the connections between them instead of the divisions and rankings that separate them. As technology propels organizations forward into profoundly new ways of working, characteristics such as flexibility, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability are increasingly essential to frame and facilitate work methods. The implementation of the Performance Appraisal Review system has assisted in distributing both responsibility and opportunity more evenly throughout UNIFEM. It has also proven to be a powerful mechanism for clarifying expectations and for ongoing negotiations about work priorities. It ensures that everyone who is responsible for an outcome is entitled to discuss performance indicators and to share in the definition of what will be seen as success. Finally, it has been a valuable management tool for identifying training needs and supporting professional development. Participation in the UNDP's Management Skills Programme has also helped UNIFEM's managers to strengthen performance and increase the organization's credibility by more effectively aligning what UNIFEM says about development with how it actually manages it.

IV. PUBLIC SUPPORT

29. In response to demands from the field and the expressed opinion of delegates at the thirty-eighth session of the Governing Council (1991) that UNIFEM should be doing more in the way of sharing ideas and influencing change, the Fund created the Advocacy Facility, which became operational in January 1992. Since then, significant progress has been made in the preparation and production of papers, training materials, books, newsletters, videos and other women-in-development resource materials, as well as in the marketing and distribution of these and other publications.

30. The first issue of UNIFEM News was printed and distributed in January 1993. Manuscripts already available to UNIFEM have been reviewed and five of the most interesting have been updated for publication. Other manuscripts have been acquired through co-publishing arrangements with NGOs and commercial publishers in both the South and the North.

31. The Editorial Advisory Committee, comprising 20 of the world's leading thinkers and activists on WID issues, has been established. The Committee is already helping to determine priority areas for documentation and is playing a key role in assisting UNIFEM to define its communications strategy up to 1995. The marketing and distribution of WID materials is being handled by Women Ink, a new service established by the International Women's Tribune Centre with UNIFEM support. Several other agencies have expressed an interest in utilizing Women Ink, and it is expected that the service will be self-financing by 1996.

32. With the approach of the Fourth World Conference for Women in 1995, much thought is being given to ways in which UNIFEM's Advocacy Facility can assist in ensuring that relevant experiences are documented and made available in a timely manner. UNIFEM funds will be used not only for its own publications/videos, but also to support important advocacy initiatives of other agencies, such as a gender-focused edition of the UNDP Human Development Report, 1994, and a second edition of "The World's Women", itself a collaborative, inter-agency effort, scheduled for publication in 1995.

33. UNIFEM national committees, active in almost 20 countries, continue to play a critical role in building a constituency of support for the Fund both with their respective Governments and within their larger societies. There are official UNIFEM national committes in 13 countries (Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Sweden and the United States) and seven committees with observer status (Austria, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland). For its part, the UNIFEM support network now extends beyond the global and regional networks already mentioned to include academic and policy-oriented networks such as DAWN; grass-roots networks such as GROOTS; and specialist networks of the media, science and technology, the private sector and parliamentarians.

34. During the first biennium of the decade, UNIFEM has gained an increased visibility among the international community and a steady increase in support from donors. The rate of growth in the core budget has been matched by increases in extrabudgetary support, and funds from other sources such as international women's groups, national committees and foundations have consistently expanded. However, in light of the decrease in official development assistance from some donor countries and the appreciation of the dollar against currencies of major donors, the Fund has witnessed a levelling-off of donor support for 1993. Mindful of the need to ensure that women in developing countries do not again fall victim to global austerity, UNIFEM will pursue a vigorous fund-raising effort for 1993-1994. It is anticipated that the Fund's growing advocacy for women in the years leading up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995 should help provide the right climate for renewed growth.

35. Since her appointment by the Secretary-General in March 1992, UNIFEM's Goodwill Ambassador, Julie Andrews, has played a significant role in drawing world attention to the needs of poor women in developing countries and to UNIFEM activities. The Fund takes pride in this new partnership and looks forward to the increased opportunities it will bring to UNIFEM.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS: THE ROAD TO BEIJING

36. UNIFEM preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women form part of a larger multilateral, system-wide effort to highlight women's full participation in economic, social and political life. The Conference will address both the strategic needs of women (i.e., their access to power) and their practical needs (i.e., their access to resources). UNIFEM will use the considerable experience gained during the UNCED process to support the work of the Conference secretariat. More specifically, the Fund is committed to a series of initiatives that stress capacity-building, empowerment, collaboration and the promotion of micro-macro linkages.

37. UNIFEM will seek to ensure the broadest involvement of women's grass-roots organizations in the Conference, and will work to strengthen women's networks, support national machineries and facilitate their participation in regional preparatory activities leading to the Conference. A fourth focus will be on women's innovative contributions to mainstream science and technology. Finally, by collaborating in the statistical update of "The World's Women" and assisting the UNDP in the preparation of the woman-focused Human Development Report, 1994 as mentioned above, the Fund will contribute to strengthening substantive discussions and giving visibility to women's issues throughout the period leading up to and including the Fourth World Conference on Women.